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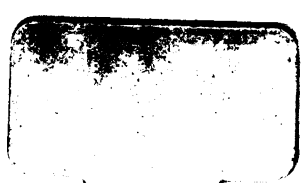

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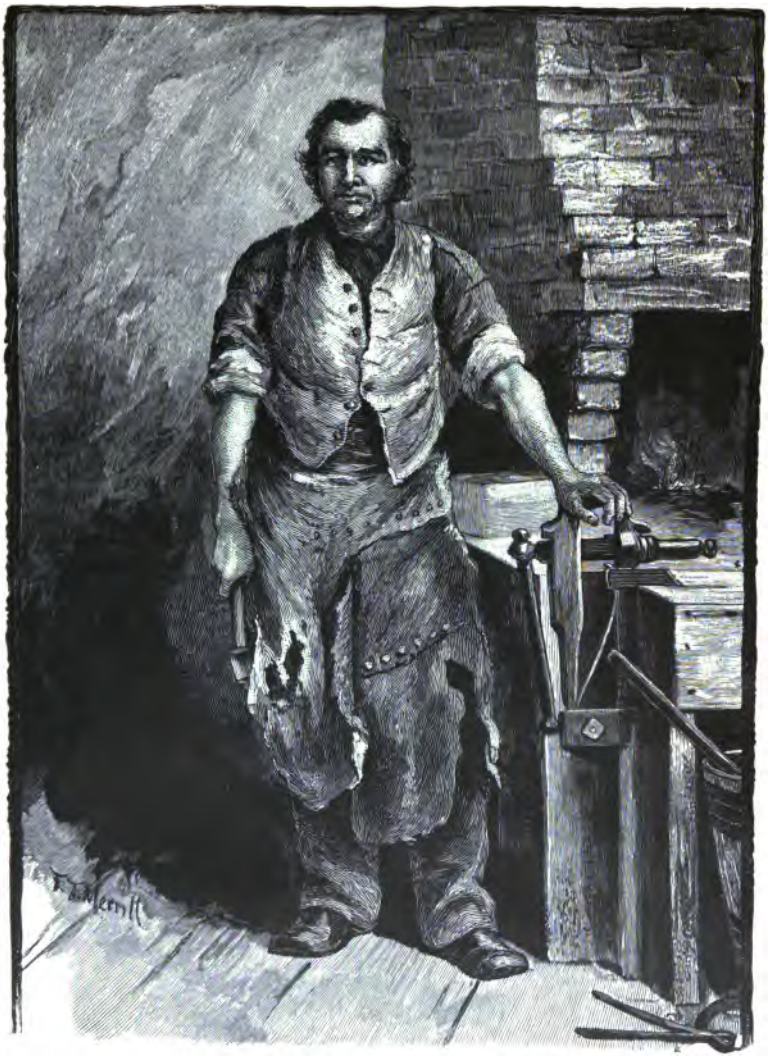

"The smith, a mighty man is he."

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH

BY

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

ILLUSTRATED

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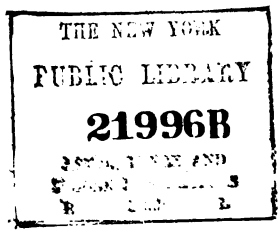
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Introduction

TRUE poet is also true priest. He takes of earth's commonest things, the plain bread and water of every-day toil and trial, and, having laid loving, reverent hands upon them, he delivers them unto us enriched with a new grace, a diviner virtue. It is the sacrament of thought.

Half a century ago — and until within a few years — a blacksmith's shop, of the old New England village type, stood in Brattle street, Cambridge, not far from Longfellow's home. Hundreds of passers-by glanced at the low roof, the overhanging boughs, the grimy smith at his forge, the gazing children at the door, and went their way without giving them a second thought. Not so the poet. Where others saw but the veriest com-

monplace he discovered fit material for tuneful song,— love, sorrow, the patience of hope, the strength of duty, all the beauty and tragedy of earnest human living. And though smith and smithy, the sheltering tree, the loitering children, poet and passers-by, alike are gone, the song lives on. Its pictures fade not; its lessons grow not old; it will but become the more precious as the times and customs which it commemorates slide farther back into the past, and differ more widely from those of to-day.

W. M. L. J.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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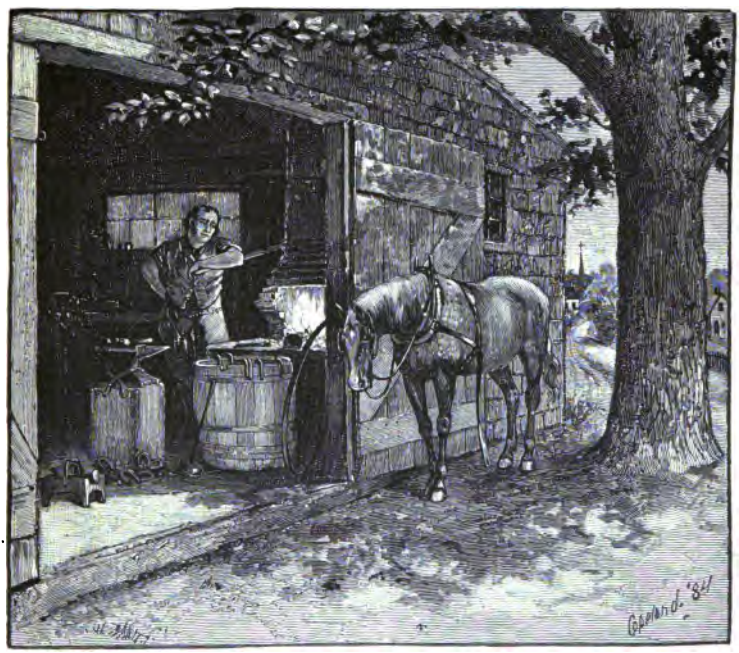
The Village Blacksmith

UNDER a spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.

MAY 1

His hair is crisp, and black, and long,
  His face is like the tan;
His brow is wet with honest sweat,
  He earns whate'er he can,
And looks the whole world in the face,
  For he owes not any man.



Week in, week out, from morn till night
  You can hear his bellows blow;
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,

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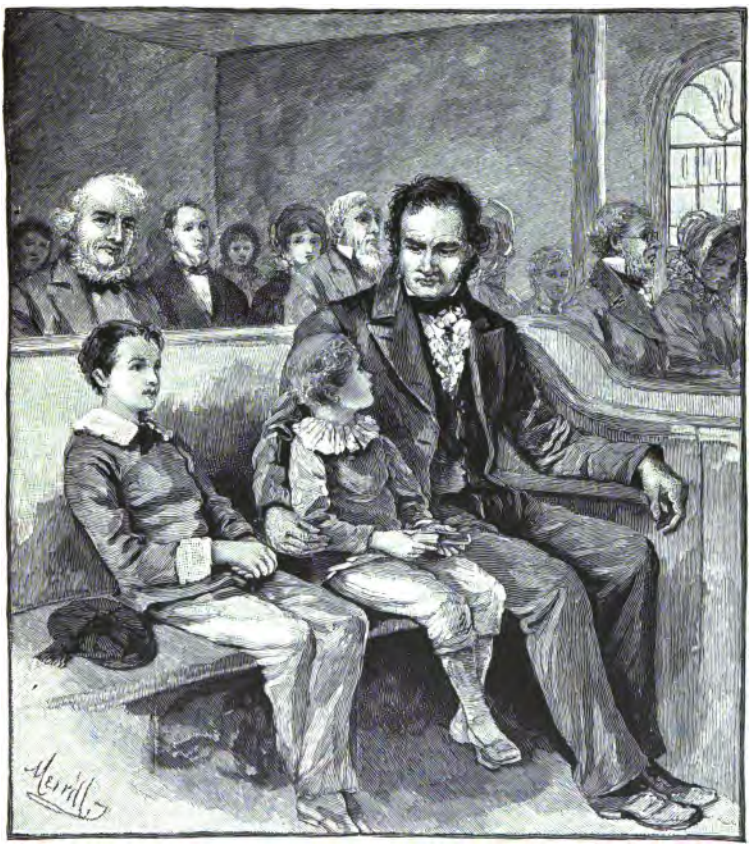
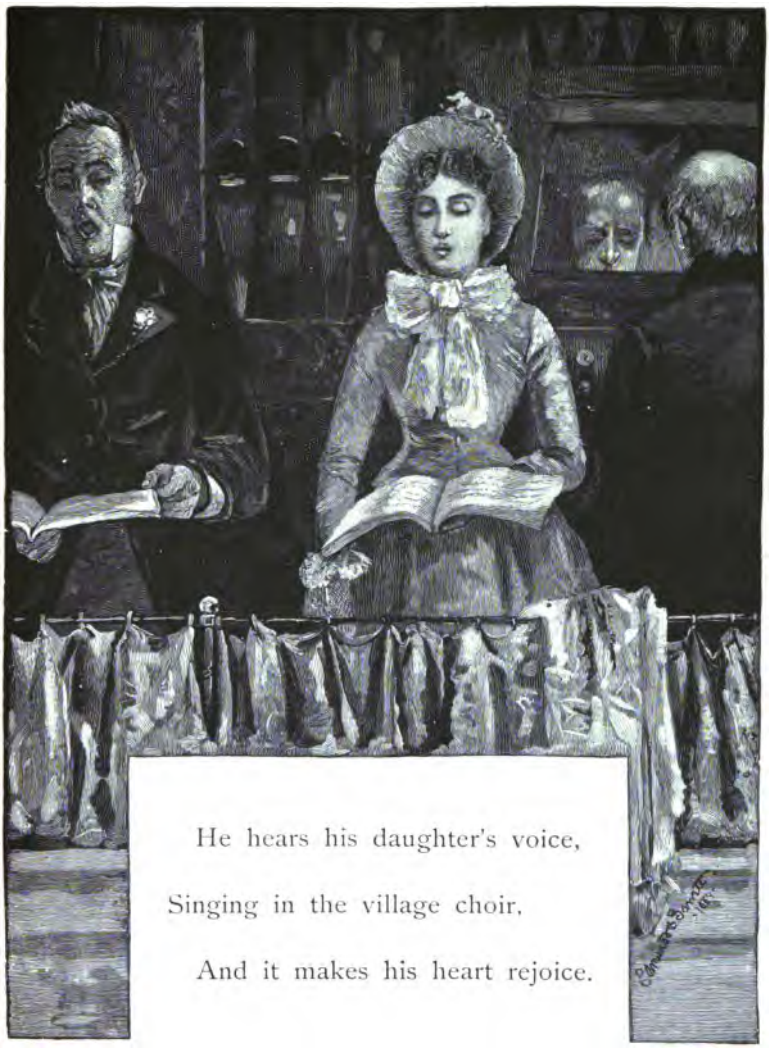
With measured beat and slow,
Like a sexton ringing the
village bell,
When the evening sun is low.

And children coming home from school
Look in at the open door;
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar,
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a threshing floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church,

And sits among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach,





He hears his daughter's voice,

Singing in the village choir,

And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother's voice,
Singing in Paradise!

He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies;
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling, — rejoicing, — sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begin,
Each evening sees it close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou hast taught!
Thus at the flaming forge of life
Our fortunes must be wrought;
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped
Each burning deed and thought!